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ABSTRACT

One hundred adults ages 18 to 42 completed measures of jealousy and dependency in romantic relationships and of sex role traditionalism. Traditionalism and jealousy were correlated, as predicted, but dependency and jealousy were not. For men, but not for women, traditionalism and jealousy were positively correlated. Dependency and traditionalism were correlated for women, but not for men. Younger and older respondents did not differ significantly in dependency, traditionalism, or jealousy. (Eight references and one table are included.) (Author)

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Jealousy, Gender, Sex Roles, and Dependency

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Paper presented at the Eastern Psychological Association, Boston, March, 1989.

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Abstract

One hundred adults ages 18 to 42 completed measures of jealousy and dependency in romantic relationships and of sex role traditionalism. Traditionalism and jealousy were correlated, as predicted, but dependency and jealousy were not. For men, but not for women, traditionalism and jealousy were positively correlated. Dependency and traditionalism were correlated for women, but not for men. Younger and older respondents did not differ significantly in dependency, traditionalism, or jealousy.

Jealousy, Gender, Sex Roles, and Dependency

Introduction

Jealousy is an emotion which can affect interpersonal relationships seriously and thus has interested researchers recently. Several variables may be related to jealousy. For instance, jealous people may be insecure and have low self-esteem (e.g., Barrell & Richards, 1982). White (1981a, 1981b, 1981c) suggests that the person who is more involved in, or dependent on, a relationship will be prone to be jealous. If people feel that the relationship they have is the most fulfilling one possible for them, they may be jealous of anyone who poses a potential threat to the relationship. Thus, dependency on a relationship is one variable related to jealousy.

Values about relationships may also influence jealousy. For example, traditional values towards sex roles may be related to romantic jealousy. White (1981a) proposes that traditional females may be less prone to jealousy because traditional sex roles give men, but not women, the desire for and right to sexual exploration. If a traditional woman's partner is attracted to another female, the woman may view the

partner's behavior as normal sexual attraction rather than true love. Conversely, the traditional male will be jealous because he feels his partner is not prone to a casual affair and therefore a flirtation with another man poses a real threat to the relationship. Thus, sex role traditionalism is hypothesized to be related to jealousy differently for men and for women; traditional females may be less jealous than nontraditional females and traditional males may be more jealous than nontraditional males.

A final feature of the present research concerns the fact that most research as been done on people of typical college age (e.g., Hansen, 1985). The present study included older people in order to identify whether findings obtained with college students could be generalized to older poeple who presumably have more experience in romantic relationships.

Method

One hundred students in regular undergraduate and continuing education classes completed the surveys. They ranged in age from 18 to 42, with a median of 19 and mean of 22.5 years. The questionnaire included background information such as age, sex, whether they were referring to a past or present relationship, and how frequently they see their partner if they are currently in a relationship. A dependency scale combined questions used by Buunk (1982) with some developed by the researchers. Sex role traditionalism was measured with the Sex Role Ideology Inventory (Kalin & Tilby, 1978). Jealousy was measured with Hansen's (1982) scale, composed of eight hypothetical scenarios which might arouse jealousy.

Results

The hypothesized relationship between sex role traditionalism and jealousy was supported (r = .22, p < .05). Dependency was not significantly correlated with jealousy. Men and women did not differ significantly in either dependency and jealousy, but men (M = 11.84) did report more traditional sex roles than women did (M = 9.06, $t(97)$ = 3.32, p < .001). Furthermore, for men traditionalism and jealousy were positively correlated (r = .30, p = .056), whereas for women traditionalism and dependency were not significantly correlated. In addition, dependency and traditionalism were correlated for women (r = .31, p < .05), but not for men.

Insert Table 1 about here

People who were not currently in a relationship, and therefore were reporting on a past relationship, had more traditional sex roles (M = 11.84) than people reporting on a current relationship (M = 9.48; $t(73)$ = -2.75, p < .01). Dependency was also correlated with the number of hours per week spent together (r = .35, p < .001).

To compare different age groups, subjects were divided into two groups, those under 21 (n = 65) and those 21 and older (n = 35. T-tests comparing the two age groups indicate that they did not differ significantly in regard to dependency, sex role traditionalism, or jealousy, although they did differ in the length of time in their current relationships (younger group, M = 12.13 months; older group, M = 60.28 months; $t(64) = 5.24$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Jealousy was related to sex role traditionalism, as predicted, but a closer look at gender differences indicates that White's (1981a) hypothesis about differential effects of traditionalism for men and women is not supported entirely; more traditional men tended to be more jealous, as White proposed, but the converse was not the case for women, as he predicted. In fact, traditionalism and jealousy were not correlated at all for women, suggesting that sex roles are important predictors of jealousy for men, but not for women.

Dependency and jealousy were not correlated as predicted for either gender. Thus, dependency appears not to be as important as some researchers have proposed. White (1981b) also failed to find a relationship between dependency and jealousy. However, dependency and traditionalism were correlated for women, but not for men. This lends face validity to the measure of dependency, since dependency is an important component of the traditional female role and is not a feature of the traditional male role.

The lack of significant differences between respondents of normal college age and older students suggests that research from college students can be

applied to other young adults, despite differences in experiences with relationships that might seem to be related to the variables in question.

In summary, sex role traditionalism and jealousy were correlated, as predicted, but dependency and jealousy were not. Men reported more traditional sex roles than women did, and, for men traditionalism and jealousy were positively correlated, whereas for women traditionalism and dependency were not significantly correlated. In addition, dependency and traditionalism were correlated for women, but not for men. Respondents who were under age 21 did not differ significantly in regard to dependency, sex role traditionalism, or jealousy from those who were older.

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Table 1: Correlations among jealousy, sex-role traditionalism, dependency, age, relationship length, and hours spent together.

	Sex-Roles	Dependency	Age	Length	Hours
Jealousy	.22**	.12	.01	-.05	.25*
Sex-role Traditionalism	--	.21*	.01	.12	-.04
Dependency		--	.11	.15	.36***
Age			--	.78***	.32**
Length of Relationship				--	.32**
Hours Spent Together					--

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .001